Numb. 323.

THE Pennſylvania GAZETTE.

Containing the freſheſt Advices Foreign and Domeſtick.

From February 4. to February 11. 1734,5.

Mr. Franklin,

'BEING the other Day near the Meeting-Houſe Corner with ſome Gentlemen, in the open Street, I heard the following Piece of Converſation; and penn'd it down as ſoon as I came home. I am confident it varies ſcarce any thing from what really paſſed; and as it pleaſed the By-ſtanders, it may poſſibly pleaſe the Publick, if you give it a Place in your Paper.

'It not being proper to name the Perſons diſcourſing, I ſhall call one of them *Socrates*, his manner of Arguing being in my Opinion, ſomewhat like that of *Socrates*: And, if you pleaſe, the other may be *Crito*.

I am Yours, &c.

A. A.

Socrates. WHO is that well-dreſs'd Man that paſſed by juſt now?

Crito. He is a Gentleman of this City, eſteem'd a *Man of Senſe*, but not very honeſt.

S. The Appellation of *a Man of Senſe* is of late frequently given, and ſeems to come naturally into the Character of every Man we are about to praiſe: But I am at ſome Loſs to know whether a Man who *is not honeſt* can deſerve it.

C. Yes, doubtleſs; There are many vicious Men who are nevertheleſs Men of very good Senſe.

S. You are of Opinion, perhaps, that a Man of Knowledge is *a Man of Senſe*.

C. I am really of that Opinion.

S. Is the Knowledge of Puſh-pin, or of the Game at Ninepins, or of Cards and Dice, or even of Muſick and Dancing, ſufficient to conſtitute the Character of a Man of Senſe?

C. No certainly; there are many ſilly People that underſtand theſe Things tolerably well.

S. Will the Knowledge of Languages, or of Logic and Rhetoric ſerve to make a Man of Senſe.

C. I think not; for I have known very ſenſeleſs Fellows to be Maſters of two or three Languages; and mighty full of their Logic, or their Rhetoric.

S. Perhaps ſome Men may underſtand all the Forms and Terms of Logic, or all the Figures of Rhetoric, and yet be no more able to convince or to perſwade, than others who have not learnt thoſe Things?

C. Indeed I believe they may.

S. Will not the Knowledge of the Mathematicks, Aſtronomy, and Natural Philoſophy, thoſe ſublime Sciences, give a Right to the Character of *a Man of Senſe*.

C. At firſt Sight I ſhould have thought they might: But upon Recollection I muſt own I have known ſome Men, Maſters of thoſe Sciences, who, in the Management of their Affairs, and *Conduct of their Lives*, have acted very weakly, I do not mean viciouſly but fooliſhly; and therefore I cannot find in my Heart to allow 'em the Character of *Men of Senſe*.

S. It ſeems then, that no Knowledge will ſerve to give this Character, but the Knowledge of our *true Intereſt*; that is, of what is beſt to be done in all the Circumſtances of Humane Life, in order to arrive at our main End in View, HAPPINESS.

C. I am of the ſame Opinion. And now, as to the Point in Hand, I ſuppoſe you will no longer doubt whether a vicious Man may deſerve the Character of a Man of Senſe, ſince 'tis certain that there are many Men who *know* their true Intereſt, &c. and are therefore *Men of Senſe*, but are nevertheleſs vicious and diſhoneſt Men, as appears from the whole Tenour of their Conduct in Life.

S. Can Vice conſiſt with any Man's true Intereſt, or contribute to his Happineſs.

C. No certainly; for in Proportion as a Man is vicious he loſes the Favour of God and Man, and brings upon himſelf many Inconveniences, the leaſt of which is capable of marring and demoliſhing his Happineſs.

S. How then does it appear that thoſe vicious Men have the Knowledge we have been ſpeaking of, which conſtitutes *a Man of Senſe*, ſince they act directly contrary?

C. It appears by their Diſcourſing perfectly well upon the Subjects of Vice and Virtue, when they occur in Converſation, and by the juſt Manner in which they expreſs their Thoughts of the pernicious Conſequences of the one, and the happy Effects of the other.

S. Is it the Knowledge of all the Terms and Expreſſions proper to be uſed in Diſcourſing well upon the Subject of making a good Shoe, that conſtitutes a Shoemaker; or is it the Knowing how to go about it and do it?

C. I own it is the latter, and not the former.

S. And if one who could only *talk finely* about Shoemaking, were to be ſet to work, would he not preſently diſcover his Ignorance in that Art?

C. He would, I confeſs.

S. Can the Man who is only able to talk juſtly of Virtue and Vice, and to ſay that "Drunkenneſs, Gluttony and "Lewdneſs deſtroy a Man's Conſtitution; waſte his Time "and Subſtance, and bring him under many Misfortunes, "(to the Deſtruction of his Happineſs) which the con-"trary Virtues would enable him to avoid;" but notwithſtanding his talking thus, continues in thoſe Vices; can ſuch a Man deſerve the Character of a Temperate and Chaſte Man? Or does not that Man rather deſerve it, who having *a thorough Senſe* that what the other has ſaid is true, *knows* alſo *how* to reſiſt the Temptation to thoſe Vices, and embrace Virtue with a hearty and ſteady Affection?

C. The latter, I acknowledge. And ſince Virtue is really

really the true Intereſt of all Men; and ſome of thoſe who talk well of it, do not put it in Practice, I am now inclined to believe they ſpeak only by rote, retailing to us what they have pick'd out of the Books or Converſation of wiſe and virtuous Men; but what having never enter'd or made any Impreſſion on their Hearts, has therefore no Influence on the Conduct of their Lives.

S. Vicious Men, then, do not appear to have that Knowledge which conſtitutes *the Man of Senſe.*

C. No, I am convinced they do not deſerve the Name. However, I am afraid, that inſtead of *defining* a Man of Senſe we have now entirely *annihilated* him: For if the Knowlege of his true Intereſt in all Parts of the Conduct of Life, and a conſtant Courſe of Practice agreeable to it, are eſſential to his Character, I do not know where we ſhall find him.

S. There ſeems no neceſſity that to be a Man of Senſe, he ſhould never make a Slip in the Path of Virtue, or in Point of Morality; provided he is ſenſible of his Failing and diligently applys himſelf to rectify what is done amiſs, and to prevent the like for the future. The beſt Arithmetician may err in caſting up a long Account; but having found that Error, he *knows how* to mend it, and immediately does ſo; and is notwithſtanding that Error, an Arithmetician; But he who *always* blunders, and cannot correct his Faults in Accounting, is no Arithmetician; nor is the habitually-vicious Man *a Man of Senſe.*

C. But methinks 'twill look hard, that all other Arts and Sciences put together, and poſſeſs'd by one Man in the greateſt Perfection, are not able to dignify him with the Title of *a Man of Senſe*, unleſs he be alſo a Man of Virtue.

S. We ſhall agree, perhaps, that one who is *a Man of Senſe*, will not ſpend his Time in learning ſuch Sciences as, if not uſeleſs in themſelves, will probably be uſeleſs to him?

C. I grant it.

S. And of thoſe which may be uſeful to him, that is, may contribute to his Happineſs, he ought, if he is a Man of Senſe to know how to make them ſo.

C. To be ſure.

S. And of thoſe which may be uſeful, he will not (if he is a Man of Senſe) acquire all, except that One only which is the moſt uſeful of all, to wit, the Science of Virtue.

C. It would, I own, be inconſiſtent with his Character to do ſo.

S. It ſeems to follow then, that the vicious Man, tho' Maſter of many Sciences, muſt needs be an ignorant and fooliſh Man; for being, as he is vicious, of conſequence unhappy, either he has acquired only the uſeleſs Sciences, or having acquired ſuch as might be uſeful, he knows not how to make them contribute to his Happineſs; and tho' he may have every other Science, he is ignorant that the SCIENCE OF VIRTUE is of more worth, and of more conſequence to his Happineſs than all the reſt put together. And ſince he is ignorant of what *principally* concerns him, tho' it has been told him a thouſand Times from Parents, Preſs, and Pulpit, the Vicious Man however learned, cannot be *a Man of Senſe*, but is a Fool, a Dunce, and a Blockhead.

Cuſtom-Houſe, New York, Feb. 4. Entred Inwards.

Bear from North-Carolina,

Entred Out. Buffleir for N. Carolina, Eager for Madeira.

Cleared. Bedford to Jamaica, Thache to Madeira, Sarly to Barcelona, Buffleir to N. Carolina, Devee to S. Carolina.

Cuſtom-Houſe, Philadelphia, Entred In.

Brigt. Hampſhire, Richard Budden, from Antigua.
Ship Cato, Thomas Fitch, from Rhode-Iſland.

Entred Out.

Sloop Elizabeth, David Nicholſon, for Rhode-Iſland.

Cleared.

Ship Diligence, Samuel Wood, to Sallee.
Snow Succeſs, Benjamin Eeles, to Waterford.
Brigt. Philadelphia Hope, George Spafford, to Barbadoes.

Advertiſements.

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